

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN NEW YORK CITY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1935

The second meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1936 was held in the office of McKim, Mead and White, 101 Park Avenue, New York City, on September 13, 1935. The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Swartwout,
Mr. Clarke,
Mr. Lawrie,
Mr. Savage,
Mr. Coolidge,
also H. P. Caemmerer,

Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: The Minutes of the Meeting held August 5, 1935, were approved.

2. PLANS FOR NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS: Mr. Malcolm Kirkpatrick, Landscape Architect of the National Park Service, was present and asked to be allowed to make a statement for Mr. Finnan, Superintendent of National Capital Parks, regarding the future plans for development of the parks, through expenditure of the one million dollar appropriation which has been made available out of Public Works funds. He explained the "deadline" affecting the National Capital Park program and presented the problem from two points of view: the curtailment of the actual development by loss of construction money, and the curtailment of their general planning program through necessarily decreased personnel.

Mr. Moore promptly stated that the Commission would cooperate in facilitating approvals. It was suggested that all plans (including preliminary sketches on those projects not up to schedule) be submitted to Mr. Clarke through Mr. Caemmerer as soon as they could be turned out of the drafting room.

Mr. Clarke offered to come to Washington, immediately sketches or general plans are available, to review on the ground those projects with which he is not already familiar. In this way decisions can be made directly, opening the way for the preparation of contract drawings.

Mr. Clarke suggested further that he and Mr. Hubbard of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission function as they have done previously as a committee of two empowered by the two commissions to recommend approval of the plans they consider. This was agreed to by the Commission.

The Commission considered the following items with Mr. Kirkpatrick:

a. Meridian Hill Park: The grading and planting plans were approved for Meridian Hill Park. Details of the Sixteenth Street niche were requested. Mr. Nagle's progress map showing work already completed and that proposed received approval of the Commission for all proposals.

Mr. Nagle was asked about the lighting scheme and he replied that the lights for the lower garden are being advertised for and will be installed very soon. A previously submitted diagram of lighting has been approved, but the design of the standard is yet to be determined.

It was suggested by the Commission that four sycamores be planted in the four planting beds fronting the Buchanan statue.

b. Montrose Park: The parti for this park was generally approved by the Commission. The Commission was opposed, however, to the addition of more tennis courts in a park such as this one, and recommended that those existing be converted to other usage more generally serviceable. Mr. Clarke pointed out that an out-of-door park is for the benefit of the community as a whole and should not be monopolized by recreation features as tennis courts.

It was recommended that the existing tennis court be converted into a children's play area. The present area of the court would remain fenced, preferably with a lower fence combined with planting. Trees would be planted within the existing court area to provide shade and around the perimeter of the area benches would be provided. It was also recommended that at the R Street entrance a pool be provided.

During a discussion of materials, it was agreed that brick would be appropriate for the walks on the upper end of the park.

c. Folger Park: For this park various details based upon the previously approved general plan were presented. Approval of the planting plan was withheld because of the lack of a hedge around the perimeter of the park. Mr. Clarke suggested an inclosure around the park consisting of a low wire fence with a hedge behind it.

The Commission did not approve the design for the pool because of its depth, recommending that the depth of the pool be decreased to a minimum of four inches and a maximum of eight inches. The proposed $19\frac{1}{2}$ inch maximum depth was regarded as a distinct hazard since it was felt inevitable that children will wade and play in the pool. The Commission recognized this as an administrative problem but made its recommendation on the basis of forestalling the ultimate necessity of erecting a protective barrier around the pool. Such a protective measure would of necessity be an unsightly makeshift. It was recommended also that the pool coping not be defined by a reveal, but that the pavement extend in an unbroken surface to the edge of the pool.

While the paving of the central plaza was entirely acceptable, the Commission was unalterably opposed to the use of concrete walks and curbs in

this and other parks included in the present program. Bituminous walks with metal edging were recommended.

d. Franklin Park: Portions of the clay model for the pool in this park were submitted to the Commission. The size of the pool, its form and relation to the paved plaza were satisfactory, but it was recommended that the pool coping itself be made wider. This revision will be made when detailed drawings are prepared.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said it is proposed to use Aquia Creek sandstone for the coping, which is to be 17 inches high. There was some discussion about the durability of the stone. Mr. Kirkpatrick said it was used for the Chevy Chase Circle Fountain and the stone has cracked there but this was due to the lack of expansion joints. Mr. Nagle said that this matter has been adjusted now and the Chevy Chase Fountain will give no further trouble. Mr. Swartwout commented on the Aquia Creek stone and said he had used it on a building at Yale and found it very satisfactory. Mr. Moore said that Aquia Creek stone was used for the Capitol and the White House in George Washington's time and that there are tombstones of Aquia Creek stone in Virginia, some of them almost 200 years old and in very good condition, some of the lettering still being legible. At the same time Mr. Moore said they used Aquia Creek stone tombstones at Wakefield and the largest slab has cracked within the past year. There appears to be a vein of bad stone in the quarry and the stone must be carefully selected.

e. Takoma Recreation Center: The sketches for the proposed pergola were generally acceptable. It was suggested, however, that the brick piers rest on concrete or stone as protection against water. It was also recommended that the pergola be built with a wood deck canvas covered so that shade and

shelter would not be contingent upon the growth of vines or the development of trees.

f. Palisades Playground: The general plan for this park (which had been approved at the August meeting of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission) was presented for the approval of the parti, exclusive of details contingent upon the development of the building plan. The parti was regarded as satisfactory, but approval was withheld with the recommendation that the parking area be eliminated and that this space be devoted to recreational facilities.

3. MODEL FOR STATUE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: Under date of August 28, 1935, the following letter was received from Mr. Edward B. Rowan, Superintendent of the Section of Painting and Sculpture of the Treasury Department:

August 28, 1935.

Mr. Charles Moore
The Commission of Fine Arts
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Moore:

In connection with the new Post Office Department Building, Washington, D. C., I am forwarding to you herewith for comment and advice a sketch model of a figure of Benjamin Franklin, designed by Mr. William Zorach, of New York City.

I shall appreciate the return of this model with the comments of your Commission of Fine Arts.

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) Edward B. Rowan, Superintendent,
Section of Painting and Sculpture.

The Secretary said that a photograph of the model had been sent to Mr. Lawrie who had advised that the Commission withhold comment as to the model until it had reached a more developed stage. Mr. Lawrie added that the legs are not well modeled, being spindly, and that no one holds a cloak as

Franklin holds this one. He seems to suggest a courtier rather than a statesman. Mr. Savage pointed out that the statue is not in proper proportion with the pedestal, being fully a head higher than it ought to be. Also the face of Franklin was not considered to be the one that is generally familiar. The statue is to be placed in the Postmaster General's office.

For the above-mentioned reasons the model was disapproved and a report was sent to Mr. Rowan accordingly. (Exhibit A)

4. MODEL FOR EAGLE ON PYLONS, KIOSKS AND FLAGPOLES IN THE TRIANGLE: Under date of August 20, 1935, the following letter was received from Mr. Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect:

August 20, 1935.

Chairman,
Commission of Fine Arts,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

In connection with the so-called Triangle Development, this city, with particular reference to the contract for flagpoles, kiosks, and pylons there are forwarded to you inclosed for comment and advice photographs of Model #8 showing different views of the same model.

The return of the photographs to this office when they have served their purpose will be very much appreciated.

Respectfully,
(Signed) L. A. Simon,
Supervising Architect.

The photographs had been sent to Mr. Lawrie, who disapproved the sketch, saying it is not a good representation of an eagle. The Commission agreed with this and a letter disapproving the model was sent to Mr. Simon. (Exhibit B)

In response to a request for a supplemental statement of criticism of the model, Mr. Lawrie sent such a letter of criticism (Exhibit B-1), and Mr. Simon was advised thereof.

5. MODELS FOR STATUARY, ARLINGTON MEMORIAL BRIDGE: Mr. Moore said that Mr. Fraser has his one-half size models for the statuary at the Rock Creek Parkway entrance at the Arlington Memorial Bridge plaza about ready. Mr. Nagle stated that Mr. Friedlander is to have his one-half size models ready about October 15. It was decided, therefore, that Mr. Lawrie in company with Mr. Swartwout and such other members of the Commission as he could conveniently reach should go to Mr. Fraser's studio at Westport and inspect the model sometime soon.

6. FOUNTAIN FOR THE GREAT ENTRANCE TO ARLINGTON: Mr. Kendall and Mr. Weinman discussed with the Commission the matter of a fountain to be placed in the niche at the Great Entrance to Arlington National Cemetery. Mr. Kendall submitted a sketch in which he showed a figure by Donatello, 12 feet high, surmounting a small basin eight feet from a large basin at the base. The Commission felt that this was better than the design of the large fountain considered at the meeting of the Commission in August. Mr. Weinman was asked whether he had any comment to make and he stated that he regarded the location as of great importance and that he believed the question of mass should be carefully considered. Whether one figure would be sufficient for the location is debatable and it might be necessary to have more than one to give due emphasis to the location. Mr. Moore thereupon showed the Commission a photograph of the McMillan Fountain, which has a double basin surmounted by three figures. Mr. Nagle said that \$35,000 has been made available for this fountain and the National Park Service is authorized to spend it.

The Commission felt that Mr. Weinman and Mr. Kendall should give the project careful study and submit a small scale model for a fountain along the lines of the one just considered. Then they should arrive at an estimate of cost for such a fountain as should be erected at this location.

Mr. Weinman was of the opinion that at least \$50,000 would be needed for a fountain to fit that location. It was then decided that request should be made for a preliminary amount for the fountain. The Commission agreed with Mr. Weinman and Mr. Kendall that regardless of cost, the right sort of fountain should be erected.

7. SCULPTURE FOR THE CALVERT STREET BRIDGE: Under date of September 3, 1935, the following letter was received by Mr. Lawrie from Dr. Cret:

September 3, 1935.

Mr. Lee Lawrie,
149 E. 119th St.,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Lawrie:

Photographs of the 3rd and 4th models for the reliefs of Calvert St. Bridge are enclosed.

As you know, #1 and 2 are now in the process of carving at the site. The bridge is to be opened to the public this month. It is therefore quite important that the 3rd and 4th models be forwarded to Washington without delay.

Would you be kind enough to pass on this submission for the Fine Arts Commission in order to save time, as I believe it was agreed upon by the Chairman.

I have carefully followed the preparation of these models, and in my opinion they are of the same order of merit that was exemplified by the two previously approved by the Commission.

With my best regards, I am

Very sincerely yours,
(Signed) Paul P. Cret.

The photographs were presented at the meeting. Mr. Lawrie regarded the models representing highway and rail transportation as shown by the photographs quite satisfactory and in general recommended their approval. Mr. Swartwout and Mr. Coolidge suggested "toning down" the wheel of the figure of "Highway Transportation". This was explained to Dr. Cret. A report was sent to Dr. Cret approving the model with this minor suggestion. (Exhibit C)

8. WINDOW FRAMES, FEDERAL RESERVE BUILDING: The Secretary stated that the suggestion had been made by the S. H. Pomeroy Company of New York City that stainless steel be used for the window frames for the Federal Reserve Board building as in their opinion bronze would stain the marble.

Dr. Cret was asked his view of the matter and he said that he was satisfied with the use of bronze as specified in the approved plans. He proposes using a dark polished granite in connection with the windows. The Commission decided, therefore, that Dr. Cret should use the bronze if that is what he wants to do.

9. LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR THE FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD BUILDING: Dr. Cret submitted a preliminary study for the landscape treatment of the grounds for the Federal Reserve Board building. The plan that commended itself to the Commission suggested a rectangular treatment with fountains on the Twentieth and Twenty-first Street sides but lacked the driveway that Dr. Miller asked for at the meeting of the Commission on August 5. Dr. Cret said he intends to give the plans further study.

10. MEMORIAL TO THE CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS AT VICKSBURG: A design was submitted by the National Park Service for a memorial to the Confederate Soldiers

at Vicksburg, proposed for erection by the United Daughters of the Confederacy of South Carolina. The design suggested a tombstone.

Mr. Lawrie inspected the design and stated that it is without artistic merit and inappropriate for a memorial as proposed. The Commission concurred in the criticism of Mr. Lawrie and disapproved the design. A report was sent to the National Park Service. (Exhibit D)

11. MODELS OF THE POINT GRAVE MONUMENT, FRANCE: Under date of September 6, 1935, the following letter was received from Assistant Secretary of State Wilbur J. Carr:

September 6, 1935.

My dear Dr. Moore:

On June 14, Mr. Maurice D mour and Mr. Jacques Menier, delegates of a French committee organized to erect a monument at Point Grave, France, commemorating American intervention in the War, presented to the American Government, through the Secretary of State, plaster casts of the two bas-reliefs carved by Mr. H. Navarre which appear on that monument.

Each of these casts is approximately seventy-six inches long by twenty-six inches high by ten inches deep, and weighs several hundred pounds. The dimensions given include the frames, which are likewise of plaster, cast in one piece with the bas-reliefs. To aid you better to form an opinion, I am sending you herewith a brochure depicting the monument and various photographs of the bas-reliefs.

With the thought of finding a suitable depository for these models the Department has written to the Secretary of War and to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution but neither the Department nor the Institution has seen its way clear to accept them.

If you have any suggestion as to what proper disposition might be made of these two artistic pieces, I should be happy to be informed.

Sincerely yours,
For the Secretary of State:
(Signed) Wilbur J. Carr,
Assistant Secretary.

The photographs submitted were inspected by the Commission. It was noted that one of the models depicted the departure of Lafayette from France and the other the arrival of the American Legion. Mr. Lawrie was asked for his opinion about the matter, and he suggested that they could be properly placed in the War College in connection with the Historical Section. Mr. Moore felt that the Commission of Fine Arts should accept them and that the question of their ultimate disposition should be left for later determination. The Commission agreed to this and a letter was sent to Assistant Secretary Carr accordingly. (Exhibit E)

12. MURAL PAINTINGS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE BUILDING: The Commission considered a draft of a report to be sent to the Section of Painting and Sculpture of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department regarding mural paintings by George Biddle proposed for the Department of Justice Building. Mr. Moore said that he had drafted this report embodying suggestions made by Mr. Swartwout and Mr. Savage; also since then he had received a letter from Mr. Lawrie. This letter, which was read at the meeting, follows:

September 7, 1935.

Dear Mr. Moore:

Regarding your letter of September 4 to the members, it seems to me that sooner or later the Commission will come to a serious misunderstanding with the Section of Painting and Sculpture in the Treasury Department because of the difference in opinions of the two groups.

What I fear may happen is that for awhile the Section of Painting and Sculpture will ask for advice and criticism of the Commission, and gradually get into the habit of not using its opinions, until ultimately the Section will feel self-sufficient as a permanent institution to decide on matters of art for Washington.

I have been wondering if you could not bring about an understanding that the Section of Painting and Sculpture's duty is practical, in the employment of artists, and that the Commission of Fine Arts' duty is the advising and judging.

Unless this is done, doesn't it seem that there is danger that all styles and ideas of architecture and its arts might be reared and used, and the plan for an American-Classical Washington put by? Even though one should grant that in some instances art in Washington has been too academically classic for our time, that would be no reason for allowing modern modish art to take root there, or become a precedent.

The Justice Building's architects having approved the Biddle sketches may be regarded as an indication of the times, but I should say that pictures of precisely the same psychological intention and with an equal degree of frankness in the manner of painting could be made on the same pattern and yet not stand akimbo against their rather classical backgrounds. The new or "modern" approach to a problem can be done in sculpture so as to be compatible with the traditional scheme, so I assume it can be done also in painting."

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) Lee Lawrie.

The Commission decided that the draft of the letter as read by Mr. Moore was very satisfactory but that the fifth paragraph of Mr. Lawrie's should be included. Mr. Lawrie said that he had written this letter with the idea in mind that unless the Commission of Fine Arts takes a firm stand on the present situation, serious complications may arise in the future as to the function of the Commission of Fine Arts and the Section of Painting and Sculpture. Mr. Lawrie felt that it should be made clear that the Section of Painting and Sculpture should take care of the construction work. It should be kept in mind that this Government agency is a "New Deal" organization whereas the Commission of Fine Arts is an establishment created by Congress and should exercise its advisory powers accordingly. A report was sent to Mr. Rowan accordingly. (Exhibit F)

13. SKETCHES FOR MURAL PAINTINGS FOR THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT BUILDING:

Under date of August 15, 1935, revised sketches for mural paintings for the Post Office Department Building by Reginald Marsh were received from the Section of Painting and Sculpture with letter as follows:

August 15, 1935.

Mr. Charles Moore
The Commission of Fine Arts
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Moore:

On June 25, 1935, the Commission of Fine Arts returned certain sketches designed by Reginald Marsh for two spaces in the Post Office Building, together with a report of the Commission on these sketches.

The comments included in your letter of June 25 were quoted to Mr. Marsh, and he has now submitted two more sketches in which he has attempted to incorporate the point of view suggested by the Commission.

The Section of Painting and Sculpture agrees that these sketches are infinitely more interesting than the former ones.

Mr. Marsh is anxious that they be submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts in this stage so that in the event the point of view is still not approved by your Commission he need not spend valuable time working them into the stage of a finished sketch for final approval. In submitting these sketches, Mr. Marsh said in part:

"If you think these sketches are good, I would like you to submit them to the Fine Arts Commission. I didn't think it worth while to make more detailed and character sketches until the Fine Arts Commission approved of these, as they might insist on an entirely different point of view. If these new ones are definitely approved, I can then concentrate and study on them alone, and make working drawings and an enlargement."

I shall appreciate the reaction of the Commission to these designs.

I hope you have had a pleasant vacation. You will be delighted to know that the latest report from Mr. Bruce is that he is steadily improving. I know that he would want to be remembered to you if he knew I were writing.

Sincerely,
(Signed) Ed. Rowan,
Superintendent,
Section of Painting and Sculpture.

The Secretary had sent the sketches to Mr. Savage. Mr. Savage said he regarded them a decided improvement on the previous ones submitted and would recommend their approval, with certain suggestions. The members of the Commission thereupon inspected the sketches and all concurred in the recommendation of Mr. Savage that the sketches be approved. Mr. Savage was asked to make a statement which could be embodied in a report and he did so as follows:

In considering the new studies by Mr. Reginald Marsh for the lobby spaces in the Post Office Department Building, members of the Commission of Fine Arts expressed their appreciation of the wider opportunity for interest in the changed view point of the studies. They commend the character and spirit that animates the two subjects and approve the designs.

They thought it advisable to make the following observations. The action and grouping in the mail car composition is effective, but the mail chutes, elevators, ramps, etc., were a bit too strong in value contrast and detracted from the groups.

In the steamship and tug scene, the figures well expressed the spirited confusion usual to such occasions but lack order or relationship, a quality not inconsistent with the feeling depicted and one more necessary as the size of the composition is increased.

A report was sent to Mr. Rowan. (Exhibit G)

The Commission adjourned at 3:00 p. m. The Commission had as guests at luncheon at the Century Club: Mr. Kendall, Mr. Weinman, Mr. Nagle and Mr. Kirkpatrick.

C O P Y

September 26, 1935.

Dear Mr. Rowan:

The model for the statue of Benjamin Franklin, by William Zorach, sculptor, to be placed in the Post Office Department building, was considered by the Commission of Fine Arts at a meeting held on September 13th.

The Commission are of the opinion that the model has not been sufficiently developed, and the Commission would prefer to withhold comment until a more studied and definite model is submitted.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Respectfully yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Mr. Edward B. Rowan, Superintendent,
Section of Painting and Sculpture,
Treasury Department,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT A

C O P Y

September 13, 1935.

Dear Mr. Simon:

The Commission of Fine Arts have considered the photographs which you submitted with your letter of August 20, of Model No. 8 of an eagle for flagpoles, kiosks and pylons proposed for the Triangle. The photographs were brought to the particular attention of Mr. Lee Lawrie, sculptor member of the Commission, and upon his recommendation the Commission disapproved the model. The Commission considered it a very poor representation of an eagle.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Respectfully yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Hon. Louis A. Simon,
Supervising Architect,
Treasury Department,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT 2

149 East 119th Street,
New York.
September 23, 1935.

Dear Mr. Caemmerer:

I have your letter of September 21 asking for specific criticisms on the model for the Eagle for the pylons, kiosks and flagpoles proposed for the triangle area. My criticism that I sent you is that the model is not a good representation of an eagle. By that I mean not only of a natural eagle, but of an eagle as the American symbol.

I don't know how this eagle is connected with the pylons and kiosks, but I remember that the designs for the structures are of a classical character. I should not say that this eagle, as modeled, has any classical character and therefore I conclude that it would not look right upon the proposed structures, and it appears to be a design for a flagstaff finial only.

The stiffness of the wings, and the arrangement of the feathers on the backs of the wings are fairly good. The body, head, neck, legs and talons to me seem bad. There isn't enough body behind the wings. In the photograph marked "A" the tail makes an unreasonable curve to join the ball. The neck is too short, and the scale of the feathers on the legs and the peculiar curves that outline the feathers are unreasonable. The legs join the body where the neck begins; they should join it more nearly under the shoulder of the wing. The talons are not like an eagle's.

On the whole, the bird does not indicate good observation of an eagle, nor is it of a type noble enough to be used on a building in Washington. I think it is proper that the sculptor use a stylistic type of modeling, but the masses and outlines should be more like an eagle's. I am returning the three photographs.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. H. P. Caemmerer, Secretary
The Commission of Fine Arts

C O P Y

September 13, 1935.

Dear Dr. Cret:

The Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting today considered photographs of models Nos. 3 and 4 for sculptural reliefs to be placed at the ends of the Calvert Street Bridge. The photographs have had the particular attention of Mr. Lee Lawrie, sculptor member of the Commission and upon his recommendation, the Commission approve them subject to a few minor changes.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Dr. Paul P. Cret,
17th and Sansom Streets,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

EXHIBIT C

C O P Y

September 18, 1935.

Dear Mr. Demaray:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting on September 13, 1935, considered the design which was submitted by your office for a monument which the United Daughters of the Confederacy of South Carolina wish to erect as a memorial to the Confederate Soldiers at Vicksburg.

The Commission advise that the design is without artistic merit and inappropriate for a memorial as proposed. The Commission therefore disapprove the design.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very respectfully, yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Mr. A. E. Demaray,
Acting Director,
National Park Service,
Department of the Interior.

EXHIBIT D

C O P Y

September 18, 1935.

My dear Mr. Carr:

Your letter of September 6th was brought before the Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting on the 13th. The members of the Commission have a keen sense of appreciation of the spirit shown by the people of France in erecting at Point Grave an important monument commemorating American intervention in the World War. They appreciate also the courtesy the French Committee through Mr. Maurice Damour and Mr. Jacques Menier, in presenting the American Government plaster casts of two bas-reliefs, the works of Mr. H. Navarre, which appear on the monument.

You ask a suggestion as to a proper disposition of these bas-reliefs. The Commission of Fine Arts would be agreeable to receiving the bas-reliefs, showing them in the Commission Rooms, and finally placing them where they will be treated as an expression of French good will and courtesy and as a commemoration of two international events--the departure of General Lafayette to America and the arrival of General Pershing in France.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very respectfully, yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Hon. Wilbur J. Carr,
Assistant Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT E

C O P Y

September 18, 1935.

Dear Mr. Rowan:

The Section of Painting and Sculpture of the Treasury Department has submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for advice sketches proposed for the decoration of the walls on the fifth floor of the Department of Justice Building. These sketches were prepared by Mr. George Biddle, a painter of reputation in other fields than mural work. It is no disparagement of his abilities as an artist that this Commission advise that his sketches for the Department of Justice Building decorations are unsuitable and should not be accepted.

The Department of Justice Building, in common with other buildings in the Triangle group, is a modernization of American architecture based on classical precedents as adapted by Thomas Jefferson and by him made popular throughout the Republic. Its interiors are made up of broad, quiet surfaces requiring similar qualities of decoration.

The sketches submitted are disturbingly busy in both pattern and scale. They are too big for the allotted spaces; when seen, as they must be, at short range they would be ineffective. Notwithstanding a certain sense of pattern and design on the part of the artist, and in spite, too, of the serious thought he has given to them, nevertheless the sketches are out of drawing and are crude and harsh in color, and even grotesque. Because of these defects, they do not carry conviction.

EXHIBIT F

Paintings of precisely the same psychological intention, and with at least an equal degree of frankness in the manner of painting, could be made on the same pattern and yet be in accord with their architectural backgrounds. Objection is made not as to the artist's intention, but the manner ^{in which} he has expressed that intention.

Attention is called to the fact that the subject selected deals primarily with social rather than legal relations. Therefore it would seem to belong to the Department of Labor rather than to the Department of Justice.

The artist has chosen a style somewhat French and very Mexican-- a style popular today because of its novelty, but intrinsically unAmerican and ill-adapted to express American ideas and ideals. The Mexican work at its best and in its own place is based on sound and enduring traditions of mural painting, adapted to the present day national conditions in that country. The sketches under consideration are derivatives from the Mexican, copies of a style, rather than a fresh and frank dealing with a subject in such manner as to carry conviction to the American observer.

In dealing with other submissions, this Commission has had satisfaction in commending designs depicting vigorously scenes and experiences of today and representing the life of our time. On the other hand, the Commission has reported adversely on sketches that failed to take advantage of obvious opportunities to give expression to those permanent artistic subjects inherent in immediate times.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very truly yours,

Mr. Edward B. Rowan, (Signed) Charles Moore,
Superintendent, Section of Painting and Sculpture, Chairman.

C O P Y

September 18, 1935.

Dear Mr. Rowan:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting on September 13, 1935, considered the revised sketches by Reginald Marsh, which you submitted with your letter of August 15th, for two mural paintings in the Post Office Department building. The sketches were brought to the particular attention of Mr. Eugene Savage, painter member of the Commission.

In considering the new studies, the members of the Commission expressed their appreciation of the wider opportunity for interest in the changed viewpoint of the studies. They commend the character and spirit that animates the two subjects and approve the designs.

The Commission thought it advisable to make the following observations. The action and grouping in the mail car composition is effective, but the mail chutes, elevators, ramps, etc., were a bit too strong in value contrast and detracted from the groups.

In the steamship and tug boat scene, the figures well expressed the spirited confusion usual to such occasions but lack order or relationship, a quality not inconsistent with the feeling depicted and one more necessary as the size of the composition is increased.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very respectfully, yours,
(Signed) Charles Moore,
Chairman.

Mr. Edward B. Rowan,
Superintendent,
Section of Painting and Sculpture,
Treasury Department,
Washington, D.C.

EXHIBIT G

